



PATRICK TESTIN STATE SENATOR

Op-Ed: A Fresh Start

Last week, I stood with other Senators from across the state and pledged to uphold the constitutions of both the United States and the State of Wisconsin. It was a humbling moment, and one that made me think about the events of the past year that had led to that point.

Specifically, I thought about all of the people that I met while travelling throughout Central and Western Wisconsin interviewing for the job of State Senator. Their stories could be heartbreaking or uplifting, but they were always captivating. I remembered the woman in Sparta, a senior citizen, who was worried about her property taxes. After working all of her life to raise a family, she was now on a fixed income, and the possibility of increased property taxes threatened her ability to stay in the home that she had grown to love. She wanted a government that wouldn't take her stable, secure future away from her.

I thought about meeting a small business owner in the Stevens Point area who has a "now hiring" sign in front of his business, but can't find employees with the right level of training to do the job. He's ready to create jobs, but the workforce isn't providing what he needs. He thought we could do a better job preparing young people for the jobs that are available in our region.

Of course, I also considered the many veterans that I've met over the past year, particularly one gentleman in Wood County. He was one of the nearly 600 people who was treated by the Tomah VA dentist who did not properly sterilize a piece of equipment, and as a result, he may have been exposed to infectious diseases. After sacrificing years of his life for his country, he deserves better.

These people and their stories make me consider both my responsibilities as a State Senator, and our government's responsibilities to society. A government that taxes more than people have the ability to pay cannot be said to be functioning in the best interests of the people. At the same time, we need to make sure that our educational institutions have the tools they need to prepare a 21st century workforce. We need to take care of our veterans, because they have taken care of us.

Everybody has a story, and those stories are worth listening to. As your State Senator, my focus will be on the people of the 24th district, and doing what I can to increase the number of opportunities that we have to succeed. My door is always open, I want your input. Feel free to e-mail my office at Sen.Testin@legis.wi.gov or call at 608-266-3123. I want to hear your story.